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Chapter Eight

Teaching Challenging Children and Revealing Jesus to Them

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Abstract

The term 'emotional behavioural disorder' (EBD) emerged in the 1960s when clinicians and educators recognised that some children display extremely inappropriate behaviours which require special educational accommodations. With the 1992 Disability Discrimination Act, followed by the 2005 Disability Standards for Education, school aged children with disabilities, including EBD, began to be enrolled in regular classrooms in Australia. Studies show that students with EBD can be very challenging for teachers, even causing some to leave the teaching profession. However, a Christian classroom, with a praying, caring and competent teacher may be the very place where these children learn to adapt their behaviour and discover Jesus. This chapter provides an understanding of EBD, its potential effect on teachers and appropriate strategies for children's academic, social and faith development.

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Introduction

A major challenge for society, and for parents in particular, is the successful inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream

education. The first part, the actual acceptance and enrolment of children with disabilities, is an ongoing struggle which has been fought for many years (Turnbull & Turnbull, 2015). The second part, ensuring a successful education for these children, may be equally difficult, especially if the child displays very challenging behaviours. Private schools, including those which are Christian, have been slower than others in accepting children with disabilities (Contreras, 2013; Cookson, 2010; Stymeist, 2008). How can teachers reveal Jesus to these children, when they may feel extreme frustration, a sense of lacking self-efficacy and may even dislike the child who challenges them personally and professionally on a daily basis? Teacher attrition rates vary between 20% and 40% in the first five years of teaching (Buchanan et al., 2013) and stress is one of the main causes. In a recent news report, a mid-career teacher reveals that she panics at the thought of having a particularly challenging student in her class. She wonders how much longer she can continue teaching.

This chapter addresses these issues by first providing the historical background of disability, inclusion and international and Australian legislation. The chapter then examines the reality of teaching children who display challenging behaviour. Then, professional prerequisites are considered, such as a whole of school approach, leadership and attitudes. Finally, specific strategies teachers may use to support these children and how they can reveal Jesus to them will be suggested.

The Concept of Inclusion

Throughout history, children with disabilities have been ignored and often treated poorly (Konza, 2008). However, by the mid-twentieth century, a number of factors began to emerge, leading to a change in people's attitudes towards children with disabilities. Parents began to advocate and pressure authorities for their children's rights (Turnbull & Turnbull, 2015), and the concept of normalisation – i.e. living a life as normal as possible – was developed by Scandinavian researchers Bank-Mikkelson (1969) and Nirjie (1970) for people with disabilities. In 1970, Wolfensberger, also advocated for 'social role valorisation,' which consists of providing people with disabilities with the opportunity to contribute to their communities and be valued (Konza, 2008). Additionally, the civil rights movement in the United States raised awareness of social justice for all (Lee, 2010).

In 1975, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act Public Law 94-142, became law in the United States. It made free education, in the least restrictive environment, available for all children with disabilities. Similarly, in the United Kingdom, the Warnock Report of 1978 raised awareness and led to the 1981 Education Act. An international approach followed:

> In June 1994 representatives of 92 governments and 25 international organisations formed the World Conference on Special Needs Education, held in Salamanca, Spain. They agreed on a dynamic new statement on the education of all disabled children, which called for inclusion to be the norm (Spanish Ministry of Education and Science, 1994).

This statement, known as the Salamanca Statement, states that children with disabilities are best educated in regular classrooms with their regular peers.

Inclusion in Australian Classrooms

In Australia, the concept of inclusion became a legal reality in 1992 with the Australian Disability Discrimination Act. This legislation lays out very clearly the entitlement of students with disabilities to be educated in regular classrooms with explicit parameters guarding their right. For children with special educational needs and their families, this was a hard-won right. However, for many teachers, both in Australia and internationally, this began a period of anxiety, loss of self-efficacy and stress (Galaterou & Antoniou, 2017). In fact, Frizzell (2018, p. 28) comments: 'Educators found themselves in unchartered territory as they attempted to muddle their way through the task of creating an inclusive environment… educators became frustrated, negatively affecting attitudes and implementation.' In recent years, inclusion has become commonplace, but the challenges continue as learning difficulties and challenging behaviours impede the successful and enjoyable educational experiences in the classroom for many teachers and students (Saloviita, 2020; Morse, 2020).

Students with challenging special needs

The Disability Standards for Education 2005 defines disability in relation to education as:

> A disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction; or a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgment or that results in disturbed behaviour (p. 8).

The emotional behavioural disturbance (EBD) and challenging behaviours of children is what stresses and challenges teachers. Martfeld (2015, p. 41) lists the various categories which fall within this group: 'psychological diagnosis related to emotional or behavioural functioning such as mood disorders, oppositional defiant disorder, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, conduct disorder, psychotic disorders, eating disorders and anxiety disorders.'

The size of the problem was shown in 2015 with the release of the Mental Health of Children and Adolescents in Australia Report (Lawrence et al., 2015). This report states that in the previous 12 months, 13.9% (that is one in seven) children and adolescents aged between four and seventeen years old had a mental disorder. 'Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) was the most common mental disorder overall, with 7.4% of children and adolescents assessed as having ADHD. Anxiety disorders were the next most common (6.9%), followed by major depressive disorder (2.8%) and conduct disorder (2.1%)' (p. 25). The report then states: 'These four categories of disorders were equivalent to an estimated 560,000 Australian children and adolescents' (p.25). It is also worth noting that many children experience co-morbidity; that is, more than one disabling condition. For example, a child with Level One autism and extreme anxiety may also have ADHD. The Centre for Disease Control (CDC, 2020) in the United States reports that in 2000 the ratio for autism was one in 150 children, but by 2016 the ratio had increased to one in 54.

Furthermore, 'around 5.1% of all children and adolescents had oppositional problem behaviours. This is equivalent to around 204,000 children and adolescents across Australia' (Lawrence et al., 2015, p. 26). The report defines oppositional problem behaviours as: 'hostile and defiant behaviours lasting at least six months characterised by

behaviour such as often losing temper, arguing with adults, actively defying adults' requests and rules, being angry, resentful, spiteful or vindictive' (p. 58). It is clear from these statistics that for teachers, who may have one or more children with these issues in their classrooms, the learning environment may be very draining, depressing and even intimidating. Unfortunately, EBD is not a visible disability, and therefore these students are expected to learn and behave as do others (Gidlund, 2018). Kauffman, Mock and Simpson (2007) note that these students have poor social skills, are often excluded from programs, drop out of school early, lack academic skills and are stigmatised by the EBD label. Therefore, being placed with a competent, caring Christian teacher who displays genuine interest in them will greatly improve their chances of remediation. McLendon (2015) finds that reliance upon God and regular communication with Him, as well as praying for each other, supports teachers in coping with stress and being able to genuinely care for students who display challenging behaviour.

Unfortunately, Garwood (2015, p. 7) notes another cause of stress. He states: 'Indeed, it has been documented that teachers of students with EBD spend less than one-third of the day on academic instruction, instead having to focus on classroom management issues whereby valuable instruction time is lost.' For teachers, this distraction from their pedagogical role, is an additional source of frustration and stress. Therefore it is critical that teachers maintain a close relationship with God, as well as using all the strategies which have been proven to be effective for children with challenging behaviour. These strategies will be discussed in the following sections.

Impact of challenging behaviours upon teachers.

Martfeld (2016) describes teaching as a stressful occupation for many, with approximately 25% to 33% of all teachers suffering from stress. However, teaching students with EBD was found to be even more stressful (Boujut et al., 2016). Regarding the increasing number of students with challenging behaviour in the classroom, The National Centre for Educational Statistics (NCES) notes that 'approximately 34% of teachers reported that disruptive behavior was interfering with their instruction and teachers cite student problem behavior as a key reason for leaving the teaching profession' (Butler

& Monda-Amaya, 2016, p. 276). In Australia, 41% of teachers report high levels of occupational stress (Milburn, 2011). From her research report on teacher wellbeing from the University of Western Australia (n.d.), Professor Donna Cross noted that 'teachers make more mental stress claims than [professionals in] any other industry', according to Australian WorkCover (2014).

The impact of stress as a result of challenging student behaviour can be extensive, affecting teachers' self-esteem, sense of teaching efficacy – i.e. their ability to effectively teach and manage the classroom (Butler & Monda-Amaya, 2016) – and causing depression and burnout (Gidlund, 2018). Griffin and Shevlin (2007) comment that 'teachers are just as vulnerable as children to the loss of self-esteem, particularly if they experience an abiding sense of failure' (p. 104). Galaterou and Antoniou's (2017) study found that behaviour and behaviour management were the main causes of teachers' stress. It is clear from their study that teaching children with challenging behaviours can be overwhelming for many teachers.

However, these children are capable of learning. Research shows that with appropriate training, over 50% can develop normal behaviour patterns (King, 2019; Biederman et al., 2008). When these children find themselves in classrooms and schools where Bible-based values of acceptance, care and genuine affection by the teachers are intentionally and persistently displayed towards them, they are more likely to respond positively. Nevertheless, there are important professional prerequisites which influence how successful teachers are in working with these students.

Given the difficulties associated with students with EBD and the stress they can bring upon teachers, it is a revelation to realise that, not only can an authentic Christian approach make a difference in the lives of these students, but it can also make a difference in the lives of teachers themselves. Garcia-Klemas (2019) investigated the effects of stress reducers such as encouraging self-talk, control and prayer. A significant reduction in stress and blood pressure was found in the group assigned to prayer rather than to self-talk.

Prerequisites for working with students with challenging behaviours

Importance of professional competence and expertise

In order to provide the best learning experience for students with challenging behaviours, it is vital to ensure that professional requirements such as competence and expertise are addressed. This does not mean that care, prayer and seeking God's guidance are not essential, but quality and appropriate pedagogies also need to be in place.

Additionally, a team approach is required. Marsh (2018) proposes a multifaceted design to address the needs of children with EBD, suggesting school connectedness, which involves 'three components: (a) school bonding and attachment, (b) school engagement, and (c) school climate' (p. 2). These components help students develop relationships with both peers and staff; increase their interest in the content provided by the teaching methods; and give them a sense of safety, acceptance and being valued. Pinkelman et al. (2015) investigated effective and sustained evidence-based practices in over 860 schools. They stated that 'the most commonly cited enablers were staff buy-in, school administrator support and consistency' (p. 171). Clearly, successful and effective educational experiences for children with EBD depend on the whole school's approach — on the students, staff, administration and parents, rather than just the efforts of the teacher alone (Cooper, 2011).

Critical importance of teacher attitude

Notwithstanding the importance of a whole school approach, the classroom teacher is the first to be in contact with the child on a daily basis. Therefore, the teacher's attitude towards the child with EBD is pivotal. Gidlund (2018, p. 57) notes: 'Both teachers' professional feelings of academic success and their personal satisfaction related to having treated all students respectfully are important in determining teachers' overall attitudes towards the inclusion of students with EBD in their classrooms.' Cooper (2011) points out that teachers may even escalate challenging behaviours:

> Teachers' active display of empathy for and positive regard toward their students can be very powerful in enabling the positive engagement of pupils. The key point here is that when teachers treat challenges to their authority or displays of negative affect from their students in visceral ways, which meets perceived challenge with counter-challenge, they are sometimes contributing to the escalation, as opposed to the resolution, of the conflict. (p. 88)

Galaterou and Antoniou's (2017, p. 653) study reveals that 'the stress caused by the behavior and management of students was a predictive factor of negative attitudes of the participating teachers.' Success for these students and their teachers depends upon breaking that negative cycle. The teacher is the adult and the professional, therefore incorporating a positive attitude and effective strategies in their teaching methods is vital. Christian teachers also have a powerful weapon in their arsenal of strategies: prayer and reliance on God. Bounds (2020) writes:

> Prayer is not a little habit pinned on to us while we were tied to our mother's apron strings; neither is it a little decent quarter of a minute's grace said over an hour's dinner, but it is a most serious work of our most serious years (p. 14).

This comment makes it clear that prayer is not a 'quick fix,' nor is it a band aid, but it is a deep, earnest reaching out to God by the teacher for the student as well as for him or herself. Genuine care and effort must characterise work with children who have special needs, especially those with emotional behavioural disorders.

Leadership

Schools which promote inclusiveness for all students, support professional development through the provision of resources, model a positive approach and develop a collaborative team ethos are more likely to be successful in dealing with students with challenging behaviours (Boyle & Hernandez, 2016). As Pinkelman et al. (2015) noted, school administrators who ensure that a consistent, collaborative teaching approach is adapted are indispensable. This is echoed by Loren and Bambara's (2006) finding that a clear, school-wide articulated vision alongside a collegial atmosphere and in-class support when needed, is vital for a program to be inclusive. Boujut et al. (2016) add: 'In fact, a high level of social support from superiors

and work colleagues is associated with a lower level of burnout, less depression and increased professional satisfaction' (p. 2876).

In addition, Striepe, Clarke and O'Donoghue (2014, p. 94) investigated leadership within faith-based schools and noted that 'leadership is not derived from bureaucratic agencies but rather the combined ethos of personal faith and the school's affiliated faith.' Thus, leadership within Christian schools works to develop a Christian ethos based on values such as 'trust, respect, support, empowerment and serving others' (Striepe et al., 2014, p. 90). In Christian schools, including and revealing Jesus is part of the daily climate, which presents a genuinely caring approach towards students with disabilities.

Effective strategies for working with students with EBD.

Functional behavioural assessment (FBA)

Over the last 40 years or so, researchers addressing challenging behaviour in the classroom, have developed an approach known as Functional Behavioural Assessment (FBA). Rather than expecting students to behave and punishing them for non-compliance, researchers 'look behind the behaviour,' and try to determine why the child is behaving in a particular way. Leif and Ahlgren-Berg (2019) provide an explanation:

> The number of students diagnosed with severe behaviour disorders is rapidly rising, and many teachers report they struggle to adequately respond. As well, school suspension rates are increasing, even though research shows suspensions do more harm than good. Research consistently shows the most effective behaviour support strategies are those that are informed by a functional behaviour assessment and emphasise the teaching of new skills. (p. 1)

FBA is an essential and effective foundation for supporting children with challenging behaviour. The assessment is dynamic and inclusive of parents, teachers and behavioural specialists; it includes information gathered from those who know the student, assessments of the environment and curriculum and the development of a hypothesis on why children behave in a certain way. Then possible

solutions are developed. The FBA is also used as the basis for both the Individualised Education Plan (IEP) and the Individualised Behaviour Plan (IBP), which guide parents and teachers to adopt an optimal approach (Albert, 2020; Leif and Ahlgren-Berg, 2019).

FBA is about fairness and justice: trying to understand why children behave in certain ways so that they can be appropriately helped. This follows the Biblical model given in Micah 6:8: 'He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?' This is a clear directive from God to act in a just manner. By looking for reasons for why children behave in certain ways, rather than reacting negatively, and showing kindness and relying on God's influence, Christian teachers are following God's admonition. Teachers' behaviour based on kindness and understanding, models Jesus' own behaviour, thus revealing Him to the students.

School-wide positive behavior support.

School-wide positive behavior supports (SWPBS) is a three-tiered program of behavioural support for students with behavioural issues (Sugai & Horner, 2009). Also referred to as School Wide Positive Behavioural Intervention and Support (SWPBIS) by other authors, the first level provides positive reinforcements and screening to identify students who need additional support. The second tier aims to rectify existing difficulties with targeted interventions such as small group social skills training. The third tier includes FBAs, Behaviour Management Plans and the involvement of specialists such as psychologists and social workers (Garwood, 2015). Peacock (2018, p. 79) notes that 'SWPBIS reduces disruptive behaviours and detractors from the school environment by teaching pro-social behaviours to increase school climate and morale.' Furthermore, the incorporation of these elements into the classroom 'has shown drastic improvements to school climates across the country' (p.79). Peacock's study (2018) also reported that higher levels of fidelity in implementing SWPBIS improved student morale, which indicates that students feel more connected to their schools as a consequence of SWPBIS. Again, working as a team, administrators, teachers and the paraprofessional staff can provide the school-wide support needed for students with challenging behaviours. In addition to improving the school climate through structured management and social training, Keeley (2008, p.

39) writes that 'an effective way to help children's faith grow is to create a culture in which children are valued and accepted.' This can be achieved school-wide and also in each classroom as illustrated in the following section.

Quality classroom management and climate

Quality classroom management involves logically organising the classroom and planning the lessons in a way that behavioural disruptions are unlikely. This approach includes: being thoroughly prepared before entering the classroom; thoughtfully organising the classroom layout by providing space and a variety of workplaces, materials and a variety of seating plans; and effective, consistent routines and transitions between activities (Garwood, 2015). A positive classroom climate, and having a sense of safety, engagement and achievement have been found to improve students' academic records and increase their resilience (Garwood, 2015). The teacher needs to regularly check that these needs are being met and be prepared to try another approach if needed. Furthermore, in order to provide a positive and encouraging atmosphere, teachers need to teach with enthusiasm. Lukowiak (2010) emphasises that students are individuals and what works for one, might not work for another; therefore, the teacher needs to be flexible and have a variety of approaches. Above all, strategies need to be proactive, and need to anticipate and prevent problems, rather than punishing the student afterwards. Lukowiak (2010) also notes that rewards such as privileges and earned activities are very effective for students with EBD.

Bond (2017, p. 31), describes the reactive behaviour of students with EBD, stating that 'these outbursts are largely caused by the environment the students experience, in particular the stress of the school environment.' Bond (2017) also notes that many teachers of students with EBD are ill-prepared and inexperienced at understanding their students' needs, comorbidity and particular brain structure; they lack the appropriate professional knowledge and skills to address those needs adequately. Therefore, administrative articulation of values and expectations, modelling of behaviour, support through mentoring, coaching and tailored professional development are essential for supporting inexperienced teachers who work with students with EBD.

Teachers who promote and act on Christian values, genuinely care for their students, and project love and kindness (as noted in Micah

6:8). They reflect Jesus through their language, voice tone, facial expressions and actions.

Teacher–student relationships.

The importance and influence of teacher–student relationships cannot be overemphasised. Teachers need to know and understand their students. As the damaging effects of negative teacher attitudes were mentioned earlier, the beneficial effects of positive teacher attitudes are also worth noting. The teachers in Burchfield's study (2013, p. 179) 'recognise the value of allowing their positive emotions to show in their classroom and understand that often positivity produces positivity.'

McHugh et al. (2013, p. 11) investigate the bridges and barriers in student–teacher relationships. They used the term 'effortful engagement' which stands for an instance in which one person actively and deliberately engages with another on an interpersonal level. The students in the study spoke clearly about the importance and value of teachers' efforts to reach out and connect with them. One female student succinctly stated: 'The ones that do know you, care more.' Students also described the teachers' support which they valued most, such as when the teacher spent time to explain a task. However, they also identified teachers who 'just taught' and made no effort to engage with the students or show care, stating that they 'were quite aware of and sensitive to teachers' stereotyping behaviours and negative assumptions' (p. 18).

Parent–teacher relationships are also extremely important. Marsh (2018, p. 4) warns that 'a lack of a shared vision of education between the school and a student's family can be a significant barrier to a student's level of school connectedness.' For students with EBD who have difficulty developing and maintaining relationships, a strong and positive home–school relationship provides them with the support they need. King (2019, p. 9) notes: 'Parent training is the predominant standard of care for ODD.' Therefore, the teacher must work closely with the parents, both to encourage each other and to ensure consistency in language, encouragement methods and consequences. Algozzine and Ysseldyke (2006) recommend a home-school reward strategy which enables parents and teachers to work together. It involves teachers giving rewards for particular behavioural achievements at home and vice versa.

Ackerman (2008) recognised that 'there are times when teachers feel verbally and physically abused by students and prayer becomes a necessity' (p. 3). However, she goes on to remind the reader that 'it is important to see Christ's mission in going after the most challenging and lost people as shown throughout the Bible, from Jonah to Zacchaeus to Paul' (p. 2). When reflecting on those that Jesus reaches out to, this can motivate and support teachers facing these issues.

Positive approach of non-contingent attention.

Rubow, Noel and Wheby (2019) observe that children with EBD tend to receive less positive attention in the classroom, and the attention they do receive from both peers and teachers often comes as a result of disruptive behaviour and is therefore negative. In their study, teachers were trained to give non-contingent attention and additional, intentional praise. As a result, the disruptions decreased, and students' on-task behaviour and staff–student relations improved.

Within inclusive classrooms, paraprofessionals are often employed to support both the teacher and the challenging students. Martinez (2017) notes however that paraprofessionals generally lack the training to confidently provide this support. Through a series of workshops, paraprofessionals were trained in providing a range of activities, individual visual timetables and in the ratio of positive to negative statements with positive results.

Marsh (2018) notes the value of praise and recommends teachers to praise all students, especially those with EBD, as often as possible. Marsh (2018) also advises that the praise should be specific, immediate and in a variety of forms, including verbal praise, visual cues, eye contact and tokens. However, it is important that the praise be genuine. Sometimes, it is only as the teacher continually prays for the child that they are able to view the child in a Christ-like way, and then praise them authentically. Alongside generous praise, it is also often appropriate for the teacher to deliberately ignore minor unsuitable behaviours, rather than reinforce them by giving them attention.

Engaging pedagogy.

A number of different teaching strategies have been used with students with EBD. Lee (2016) explored the importance of self-determination for students with challenging behaviour, examining

the effects of a classroom approach which is either supportive of autonomy or controlling. In the supportive approach, 'teachers focus on developing relationships to support intrinsic motivation rather than relying on the use of extrinsic motivation' (p. 12). Linked to the concept of intrinsic motivation is the concept of documentation and self-monitoring behaviour (Lukowiak, 2010), whereby students record their behavioural achievements on a daily basis. Sadly, Lee (2016) notes that rather than emphasising the student's strengths, 'focus on deficit behaviours has been so pervasive that in some school contexts the term "curriculum of control" has been used to describe many classrooms and schools serving students with EBD' (p. 24). Simpson, Peterson and Smith (2011) note teachers' frequent lack of knowledge and lack of ongoing professional development for teaching students with EBD, despite the well-documented link between teacher quality and student outcomes.

An important aspect of engaging pedagogy is the intentional provision of opportunities for the students to respond (OTR). Garwood (2015) comments: 'An OTR involves giving students a chance to demonstrate proficiency in a situation with a high probability of success and can be accomplished through activities such as choral responding or the use of response cards' (p. 37). However, Garwood also notes: 'Unfortunately, research shows students with EBD receive fewer OTRs than their peers and are therefore more likely to be disengaged and disaffected during school hours' (p. 37). Reinke, Herman and Stormont (2013) investigated the use of praise and OTRs, finding that challenging students are provided with very few OTRs during the day and are increasingly reprimanded. In fact, one teacher in the study gave a ratio of ten reprimands to every praise. As a result, the students' challenging behaviours intensifed, and the teachers described feelings of emotional exhaustion. Reversing the ratio, so that attention, praise, care and providing opportunities to respond, and encouragement to do so, are predominant, will help students feel valued and reduce their need to behave inappropriately to gain attention.

An evidence-based teaching approach which is effective for all students with special needs is that of differentiation (Conderman & Hedin, 2015). This involves the teacher using a variety of methods to match the teaching content, delivery and expected outcomes with the child's needs, interests and abilities.

In 2015, Phillips investigated teaching approaches for students with EBD. Her thoughts on the importance of engaging pedagogy are clear: 'Today, a teacher must actively teach. They are the heartbeat of the classroom... The close-knit relationship between teacher and student is key to lighting that much needed fire under the student, allowing him/her to grow in a nurturing environment (p. 18)'. Furthermore, she states: 'It takes ingenuity and the knowledge from teachers as well to put forth the effort' (p. 21). Phillips compares the direct instruction and cooperative learning approaches for challenging students with EBD and notes:

> The Cooperative Learning teaching style intervention truly engaged more students and achieved successful academic results to show that the students were not only learning, but they were connecting what they learned through various venues such as verbal responses, and group activities that rendered former knowledge (p. 44).

Phillips' (2015) findings are echoed in King's (2019) research which advises that issues for students with challenging behaviours, in particular for students with difficulties in flexibility, adaptability and problem solving, need to be specifically addressed. Programs which teach problem solving, how to calmly 'try another way,' social skills and how to work through changes are of considerable benefit.

Use of assistive technology.

Within the context of effective pedagogy, assistive technology is extremely useful. Given that interpersonal skills, such as listening and effective communication, are essential for developing and maintaining successful relationships, Murry (2018) explored the use of video modelling of social skills for students with EBD. Murray writes: 'school personnel who implement guided socialization opportunities in inclusive school environments produce greater positive student outcomes related to interacting with peers and adults' (p. 236).

Fokides, Chronopoulou and Kaimara (2019) note the motivational value of ICTs, particularly when used in a 3D virtual environment as students can engage with the material in a safe setting. For students on the autism spectrum, the visual learning experience is even more engaging. Brás (2018) finds that teachers need small, practical, supported workshops to develop relevant digital materials as part of their professional development.

Medication

According to Lloyd, Torelli and Symons (2016), the use of psychotropic medications for students with emotional behavioural disorders is increasing, and while these medications should not be seen as a fix-all, they are valuable as a supplement to behavioural interventions. However, these authors note that clinical and educational professionals rarely collaborate to monitor the implementation of these procedures. Therefore, medication should not be perceived as a magic wand, but rather as an opportunity to calm the student down while the teachers, parents and clinical staff together develop specific, relevant behavioural modifications.

Revealing Jesus: a Christian worldview.

Interwoven throughout daily school activities are teachers' personal relationship with Jesus. Shield's (2019) leadership research found that for Christian leaders and their staff, a strong, ongoing relationship between themselves and God, is key to their successful practice. In fact, this relationship is pivotal to their worldview, their ability and motivation to think, communicate and act in Christian ways. The development of a personal Christian worldview relies upon teachers communicating with God through prayer, reflection, meditation, reading and gratitude. Additionally, it is essential that teachers are alert and receptive to God's prompting, guidance and empowerment (Shields, 2019). This two-way communication is ongoing and dynamic, and critical to the Christian lifestyle in general. Teachers with this worldview, who combine excellent pedagogy and professional competence with care and compassion, are in the best position to reach out and support children with disabilities.

Worsley (2013) provides the following beautiful comment: 'One key way in which the flower of education flourishes is in the natural affection that flows from the teacher to the child. It is the genuine love that is present in the school' (Worsley, 2013, p. 11). This Christian ideal does not occur by chance but is based on a continuous dialogue between the teacher and Jesus, determination and perseverance. The Bible frequently repeats Jesus' admonition to 'abide in Him' (John 15); abiding in Jesus is about being close to Him through prayer, meditation, Bible reading and being open to promptings of the Holy Spirit. Gibson (2015) sums up the reality of teachers with challenging students:

> Finally, educators do not always "feel" like being compassionate towards students who are difficult to love, being disruptive and demanding. Teachers may resent considering a compassionate response to behaviourally troubled students, defaulting to a more punitive response because it feels justified. It can also be hard for teachers and school leaders to find the time and resources, let alone sustain the physical and emotional energy to consistently and equitably support students' behavioural needs (p. 21).

As teachers abide in Christ, listening for His guidance and responding to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, they will be enabled to demonstrate the agape love of which the Bible speaks (I Corinthians 13:4-13). 'So, these three things continue forever: faith, hope and love. And the greatest of these is love' (v.13).

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